



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Whether merging two organizational cultures or changing an ineffective culture, leaders need highly developed skills, competencies, and sensitivities. The following lessons from persons who have struggled with cultural dissonance can help even the most experienced leaders as they guide their organizations through the often chaotic changes shaping the healthcare ministry today.

ADAPTIVE CULTURES ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

In the healthcare environment, change is a constant for the foreseeable future. Organizations with an adaptive culture have the greatest chance to succeed over the long term.¹

CHANGE IS NOT A QUICK FIX

Developing an adaptive culture requires a long-term commitment. Changing a culture is not a quick fix, nor is it for the faint of heart. Only steady, consistent commitment can achieve the desired result.

RITUAL KEEPS THE PROCESS MOVING

Changes result in loss as well as gain, and successful organizations are sensitive to the pain change can cause. Using ritual to recognize losses and validate grieving is an essential part of moving on.

TRANSITIONS ARE DIFFICULT

Individuals deal with change all the time, in both their work and private lives. The most difficult aspect of change is the "transition"—the internal psychological processing needed before one can come to terms with a new situation.²

CHANGE NEEDS A CHAMPION

Rev. Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM (see related article, p. 25), suggests that a champion represents one

Eight Tips For Leaders of Change

of three types of leader: authority figure, visionary-innovator, and renewal-doer.³ In some instances, the chief executive officer (CEO) embodies all these qualities, but often others with influence complement the CEO's abilities. CEOs should share their authority with such people and support their contributions to the change process.

THE FIRST STEP IS UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

Leaders should not underestimate the importance of human relationships and the influence of both personal and organizational values and beliefs. In planning any type of partnership arrangement, leaders should consider the cultural implications.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS ARE PERSONAL

Frequent, honest communications make cultural change and adaptation easier. But data and information, no matter how reasonable or how much, will not bring people to accept change. To gain support, leaders should communicate on a "human" level, explaining to everyone in the organization how change is going to affect his or her life.

TIME SPENT ON CULTURE ISSUES IS TIME WELL-SPENT

In all board meetings, planning sessions, and negotiation preparations, time should be devoted to culture issues. Tolerance for change varies from person to person, and individual differences should be acknowledged and accommodated. □

NOTES

1. John P. Kotter and James L. Heskett, *Corporate Culture and Performance*, Free Press, New York City, 1992.
2. William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, 1991.
3. Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Strategies for Growth in Religious Life*, Alba House, New York City, 1986.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES NEEDED TO FACILITATE CHANGE

Guiding Principles

Leadership Competencies*

Adaptive cultures are the most likely to succeed.

- **Integration of Ministry Values:** A lived congruence between the mission and values of the organization and one's personal beliefs and values
- **Shaping the Environment:** Reshaping internal and external realities for greater efficiency, competence, or effective implementation of the organizational mission
- **Insight-driven Strategic Action:** The uncommon intuitive ability to integrate thought, value, and action and to seize opportunities unimagined by others

Change is not a quick fix.

- **Faith in God:** Seeing the presence of God in the events of everyday life
- **Finding Meaning:** Discerning purpose in what one does and what happens to one's organization

Ritual keeps the process moving.

- **Change Leadership:** Focusing and energizing a group—a team, the organization, even other organizations—to accomplish change together
- **Moral Wisdom:** The ability to set moral priorities with a strong caring focus, recognizing that circumstances alter events

Transitions are difficult.

- **Positive Regard:** A strong, optimistic, respectful view of individuals and teams
- **Positive Affiliation:** A positive orientation toward others, a desire to work with others—deriving intrinsic satisfaction from relationships

Change needs a champion.

- **Self-Confidence:** Confidence in one's decisions and opinions and in one's abilities to address challenging circumstances
- **Genuineness:** Acting in accordance with expressed beliefs and values—"walking the talk"

The first step is understanding culture.

- **Information Seeking:** A driving curiosity and desire to know more about things, people, or issues
- **Analytic Thinking:** Addressing complex situations and problems by breaking them into smaller pieces, organizing and comparing them systematically, and identifying causal relationships
- **Organizational Awareness:** Understanding the power relationships in one's own and other organizations and predicting how new events and situations will affect the organization

Effective communications are personal.

- **Genuineness:** Acting in accordance with expressed beliefs and values—"walking the talk"
- **Positive Affiliation:** A positive orientation toward others, a desire to work with others—deriving intrinsic satisfaction from relationships

Time spent on culture issues is time well-spent.

- **Interpersonal Understanding:** The ability to hear accurately and understand unspoken or partially expressed thoughts, feelings, and concerns
- **Positive Regard:** A strong, optimistic, respectful view of individuals and teams

*From: *Transformational Leadership for the Healing Ministry: Competencies for the Future*, Catholic Health Association, St. Louis, 1994.